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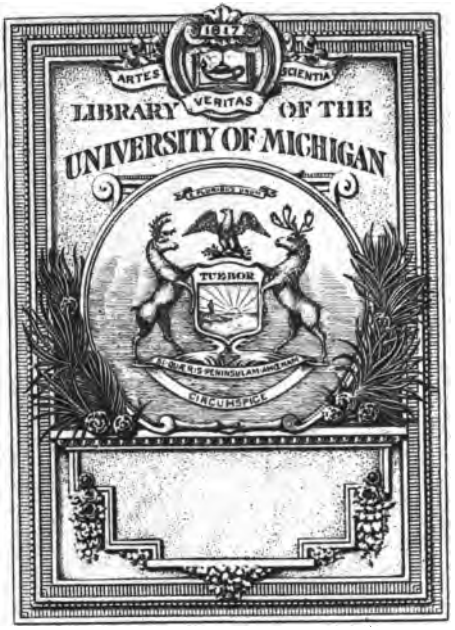
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VILLAGE POLITICS:

ADDRESSED TO

ALL THE MECHANICS, JOURNEYMEN,

AND

DAY-LABOURERS,

IN GREAT RRITAIN.

BY WILL CHIP,

A COUNTRY CARPENTER.

(by Hannah More)

FIFTH EDITION.

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VILLAGE POLITICS.

A DIALOGUE between JACK ANVIL the Blackſmith, and TOM HOD the Maſon.

Jack. WHAT's the matter, Tom? Why doſt look ſo diſmal?

Tom. Diſmal indeed! Well enough I may.

Jack. What's the old mare dead? or work ſcarce?

Tom. No, no, work's plenty enough, if a man had but the heart to go to it.

Jack. What book art reading? Why doſt look ſo like a hang-dog?

Tom. (looking on his book) Cauſe enough. Why I find here that I'm very unhappy, and very miſerable; which I ſhould never have known if I had not had the good luck to meet with this book. O 'tis a precious book!

Jack. A good ſign tho'; that you can't find out you're unhappy without looking into a book for it. What is the matter?

Tom. Matter! Why I want Liberty.

Jack. Liberty! What has any one fetched a warrant for thee? Come man, cheer up, I'll be bound for thee.—Thou art an honeſt fellow in the main, tho' thou doſt tipple and prate a little too much at the roſe and crown.

Tom. No, no, I want a new conſtitution.

Jack. Indeed! Why I thought thou hadſt been a deſperate healthy fellow. Send for the doctor then.

Tom. I'm not ſick; I want Liberty and Equality, and the Rights of Man.

Jack. O now I underſtand thee. What thou art a leveller and a republican, I warrant.

Tom. I'm a friend to the people. I want a reform.

Jack. Then the ſhorteſt way is to mend thyſelf.

Tom. But I want a general reform.

Jack. Then let every one mend one.

Tom. Pooh! I want freedom and happineſs, the ſame as they have got in France.

Jack. What, Tom, we imitate them? We follow the French! Why they only begun all this miſchief at firſt, in order to be juſt what we are already. Why I'd ſooner go to the Negers to get learning, or to the Turks to get religion, than to the French for freedom and happineſs.

Tom. What do you mean by that? ar'nt the French free?

Jack. Free, Tom! aye, free with a witneſs. They are all ſo free, that there's nobody ſafe. They make free to rob whom they will, and kill whom they will. If they don't like a man's looks, they make free to hang him without judge or jury, and the next lamp-poſt does for the gallows; ſo then they call themſelves free, becauſe you ſee they have no king to take them up and hang them for it.

Tom. Ah, but Jack, didn't their King formerly hang people for nothing too? and beſides, wer'n't they all Papiſts before the Revolution?

Jack. Why, true enough, they had but a poor ſort of religion, but bad is better than none, Tom. And ſo was the government bad enough too, for they could clap an innocent man into priſon, and keep him there too as long as they would, and never ſay with your leave or by your leave, Gentlemen of the Jury. But what's all that to us?

Tom. To us! Why don't our governors put many of our poor folks in priſon againſt their will? What are all the gaols for? Down with the gaols, I ſay; all men ſhould be free.

Jack. Harkee, Tom, a few rogues in priſon keep the reſt in order, and then honeſt men go about their buſineſs, afraid of nobody; that's the way to be free. And let me tell thee, Tom, thou and I are tried by our peers as much as a lord is. Why the king can't ſend me to priſon if I do no harm, and if I do, there's reaſon good why I ſhould go there. I may go to law with Sir John, at the great caſtle yonder, and he no more dares lift his little finger againſt me than if I were his equal. A lord is hanged for hanging matter, as thou or I ſhould be; and if it will be any comfort to thee, I myſelf remember a Peer of the Realm being hanged for killing his man, juſt the ſame as the man would have been for killing him*.

Tom. Well, that is ſome comfort.—But have you read the Rights of Man?

Jack. No, not I. I had rather by half read the *Whole Duty of Man.* I have but little

* Lord Ferrers was hanged in 1760, for killing his ſteward.

time for reading, and ſuch as I ſhould therefore only read a bit of the beſt.

Tom. Don't tell me of thoſe old faſhioned notions. Why ſhould not we have the ſame fine things they have got in France? I'm for a *Conſtitution* and *Organization*, and *Equalization*.

Jack. Do be quiet. Now, Tom, only ſuppoſe this nonſenſical equality was to take place; why it would not laſt while one could ſay Jack Robinſon; or ſuppoſe it could—ſuppoſe, in the general diviſion, our new rulers were to give us half an acre of ground a-piece; we could to be ſure raiſe potatoes on it for the uſe of our families; but as every other man would be equally buſy in raiſing potatoes for *his* family, why then you ſee if thou waſt to break thy ſpade, I ſhould not be able to mend it. Neighbour Snip would have no time to make us a ſuit of cloaths, nor the clothier to weave the cloth, for all the world would be gone a digging. And as to boots and ſhoes, the want of ſome one to make them for us, would be a greater grievance than the tax on leather. If we ſhould be ſick, there would be no doctor's ſtuff for us; for doctor would be digging too. We could not get a chimney ſwept, or a load of coal from pit, for love or money.

Tom. But ſtill I ſhould have no one over my head.

Jack. That's a miſtake: I'm ſtronger than thou; and Standiſh, the exciſeman, is a better ſcholar; ſo we ſhould not remain equal a mi-

hurt. I ſhould out-*fight* thee, and he'd out-*wit* thee. And if ſuch a ſturdy fellow as I am, was to come and break down thy hedge for a little firing, or to take away the crop from thy ground, I'm not ſo ſure that theſe new-fangled laws would ſee thee righted. I tell thee, Tom, we have a fine conſtitution already, and our fore-fathers thought ſo.

Tom. They were a pack of fools, and had never read the Rights of Man.

Jack. I'll tell thee a ſtory. When Sir John married, my Lady, who is a little fantaſtical, and likes to do every thing like the French, begged him to pull down yonder fine old caſtle, and build it up in her frippery way. No, ſays Sir John; what ſhall I pull down this noble building, raiſed by the wiſdom of my brave anceſtors; which outſtood the civil wars, and only underwent a little needful repair at the Revolution; and which all my neighbours come to take a pattern by—ſhall I pull it all down, I ſay, only becauſe there may be a dark cloſet or an inconvenient room or two in it? My lady mumpt and grumbled; but the caſtle was let ſtand, and a glorious building it is, though there may be a trifling fault or two, and tho' a few decays may want ſtopping; ſo now and then they mend a little thing, and they'll go on mending, I dare ſay, as they have leiſure, to the end of the chapter, if they are let alone. But no pull-me-down works. What is it you are crying out for, Tom?

Tom. Why for a perfect government.

Jack. You might as well cry for the moon.

There's nothing perfect in this world, take my word for it.

Tom. I don't see why we are to work like slaves, while others roll about in their coaches, feed on the fat of the land, and do nothing.

Jack. My little maid brought home a story-book from the Charity-School t'other day, in which was a bit of a fable about the Belly and the Limbs. The hand said, I won't work any longer to feed this lazy belly, who sits in state like a lord, and does nothing. Said the feet, I won't walk and tire myself to carry him about; let him shift for himself; so said all the members; just as your Levellers and Republicans do now. And what was the consequence? Why the belly was pinched to be sure; but the hands and the feet, and the rest of the members suffered so much for want of their old nourishment, that they fell sick, pined away, and would have died, if they had not come to their senses just in time to save their lives, as I hope all you will do.

Tom. But the times—but the taxes, Jack.

Jack. Things are dear, to be sure: but riot and murder is not the way to make them cheap. And taxes are high; but I'm told there's a deal of old scores paying off, and by them who did not contract the debt neither, Tom. Besides things are mending, I hope, and what little is done, is for us poor people; our candles are somewhat cheaper, and I dare say, if the honest gentleman is not disturbed by you levellers, things will mend every day. But bear one thing in mind: the more we

riot, the more we ſhall have to pay. Mind another thing too, that in France the poor paid all the taxes, as I have heard 'em ſay, and the quality paid nothing.

Tom. Well, I know what's what, as well as another; and I'm as fit to govern——

Jack. No, Tom, no. You are indeed as good as another man, ſeeing you have hands to work, and a ſoul to be ſaved. But are all men fit for all kinds of things? Solomon ſays, "How can he be wiſe whoſe talk is of oxen?" Every one in his way. I am a better judge of a horſe-ſhoe than Sir John; but he has a deal better notion of ſtate affairs than I; and I can no more do without him than he can do without me. And few are ſo poor but they may get a vote for a parliament-man, and ſo you ſee the poor have as much ſhare in the government as they well know how to manage.

Tom. But I ſay all men are equal. Why ſhould one be above another?

Jack. If that's thy talk, Tom, thou doſt quarrel with providence and not with government. For the woman is below her huſband, and the children are below their mother, and the ſervant his below is maſter.

Tom. But the ſubject is not below the king; all kings are "crowned ruffians:" and all governments are wicked. For my part, I'm reſolved I'll pay no more taxes to any of them.

Jack. Tom, Tom, this is thy nonſenſe; if thou didſt go oftener to church, thou wouldeſt know where it is ſaid, "Render unto Cæſar the things that are Cæſar's;" and alſo, "Fear

God, honour the king." Your book tells you that we need obey no government but that of the people, and that we may faſhion and alter the government according to our whimſies; but mine tells me, "Let every one be ſubject to the higher powers, for all power is of God." Thou ſayſt, thou wilt pay no taxes to any of them. Doſt thou know who it was that worked a miracle, that he might have money to pay tribute with, rather than ſet you and me an example of diſobedience to government?

Tom. I ſay we ſhall never be happy, till we do as the French have done.

Jack. The French and we contending for liberty, Tom, is juſt as if thou and I were to pretend to run a race; thou to ſet out from the ſtarting poſt, when I am in already: why we've got it man; we've no race to run. We're there already. Our conſtitution is no more like what the French one was, than a mug of our Taunton beer is like a platter of their ſoup-maigre.

Tom. I know we ſhall be undone, if we don't get a new *conſtitution*—that's all.

Jack. And I know we ſhall be undone if we *do*. I don't know much about politics, but I can ſee by a little, what a great deal means. Now only to ſhew thee the ſtate of public credit, as I think Tim Standiſh calls it. There's Farmer Furrow: a few years ago he had an odd 50l. by him; ſo to keep it out of harm's way, he put it out to uſe, on government ſecurity, I think he calls it. Well; t'other day he married one of his daughters,

ſo he thought he'd give her that 50l. for a bit of a portion. Tom, as I'm a living man, when he went to take it out if his fifty pounds was not grown almoſt to an hundred! and wou'd have been a full hundred, they ſay, by this time, if the gentleman had been let alone.

Tom. Well, ſtill, as the old ſaying is—I ſhou'd like to do as they do in France.

Jack. What ſhou'dſt like to be murder'd with as little ceremony as Hackabout, the butcher, knocks down a calf? Then for every little bit of tiff, a man gets rid of his wife. And as to liberty of *conſcience*, which they brag ſo much about, why they have driven away their parſons, (aye and murdered many of 'em) becauſe they would not ſwear as they would have them. And then they talk of liberty of the preſs; why, Tom, only t'other day they hanged a man for printing a book againſt this pretty government of theirs.

Tom. But you ſaid yourſelf it was ſad times in France, before they pulled down the old government.

Jack. Well, and ſuppoſe the French were as much in the right as I know them to be in in the wrong; what does that argue for *us*? Becauſe neighbour Furrow t'other day pulled down a crazy, old barn, is that a reaſon why I muſt ſet fire to my tight cottage?

Tom. I don't ſee why one man is to ride in his coach and ſix, while another mends the highway for him.

Jack. I don't ſee why the man in the coach is to *drive over* the man on foot, or hurt a hair of his head. And as to our great folks, that you levellers have ſuch a ſpite againſt, I

don't pretend to ſay they are a bit better than they ſhould be; but that's no affair of mine; let them look to that; they'll anſwer for that in another place. To be ſure, I wiſh they'd ſet us a better example about going to church, and thoſe things; but ſtill *hoarding's* not the ſin of the age; they don't lock up their money—away it goes, and every body's the better for it. They do ſpend too much, to be ſure, in feaſtings and fandangoes, and if I was a parſon I'd go to work with 'em in another kind of a way; but as I am only a poor tradeſman, why 'tis but bringing more griſt to my mill. It all comes among the people—Their coaches and their furniture, and their buildings, and their planting, employ a power of trades people and labourers.--Now, in this village, what ſhou'd we do without the caſtle? Tho' my Lady is too rantipoliſh, and flies about all ſummer to hot water and cold water, and freſh water and ſalt water, when ſhe ought to ſtay at home with Sir John; yet when ſhe does come down, ſhe brings ſuch a deal of gentry that I have more horſes than I can ſhoe, and my wife more linen than ſhe can waſh. Then all our grown children are ſervants in the family, and rare wages they have got. Our little boys get ſomething every day by weeding their gardens, and the girls learn to ſew and knit at Sir John's expence; who ſends them all to ſchool of a Sunday.

Tom. Aye, but there's not Sir Johns in every village.

Jack. The more's the pity. But there's other help. 'Twas but laſt year you broke

your leg, and was nine weeks in the Briſtol Firmary, where you was taken as much care of as a lord, and your family was maintained all the while by the pariſh. No poor-rates in France, Tom, and here there's a matter of two million and a half paid for them, if twas but a little better managed.

Tom. Two million and a half!

Jack. Aye, indeed. Not tranſlated into ten-pences, as your French millions are, but twenty good ſhillings to the pound. But, when this levelling comes about, there will be no firmaries, no hoſpitals, no charity-ſchools, no ſunday-ſchools, where ſo many hundred thouſand poor ſouls learn to read the word of God for nothing. For who is to pay for them? *equality* can't afford it; and thoſe that may be willing won't be able.

Tom. But we ſhall be one as good as another, for all that.

Jack. Aye, and bad will be the beſt. But we muſt work as we do now, and with this difference, that no one will be able to pay us. Tom! I have got the uſe of my limbs, of my liberty, of the laws, and of my bible. The two firſt I take to be my *natural* rights; the two laſt my *civil* and *religious*; theſe, I take it, are the *true Rights of Man*, and all the reſt is nothing but nonſenſe, and madneſs, and wickedneſs. My cottage is my caſtle; I ſit down in it at night in peace and thankfulneſs, and "no man maketh me afraid." Inſtead of indulging diſcontent, becauſe another is richer than I in this world, (for envy is at the bottom of your equality works) I read my bible,

go to church, and think of a treaſure in heaven.

Tom. Aye, but the French have got it in *this* world.

Jack. 'Tis all a lie, Tom. Sir John's butler ſays his maſter gets letters which *ſay* 'tis all a lie. 'Tis all murder, and nakedneſs, and hunger; many of the poor ſoldiers fight without victuals, and march without cloaths. Theſe are your *democrats!* Tom.

Tom. What then, doſt think all the men on our ſide wicked?

Jack. No, not ſo neither, they've made fools of the moſt of you, as I believe. I judge no man, Tom; I hate no man. Even republicans and levellers, I hope, will always enjoy the protection of our laws; though I hope they will never be our law-*makers*. There's many true diſſenters, and there's hollow churchmen; and a good man is a good man, whether his church has got a ſteeple to it or not. The new-faſhioned way of proving one's religion is to *hate* ſomebody. Now, though ſome folks pretend that a man's hating a Papiſt, or a Preſbyterian, proves him to be a good *Churchman*, it don't prove him to be a good *Chriſtian*, Tom. As much as I hate republican works, I'd ſcorn to *live* in a country where there was not liberty of conſcience; and where every man might not worſhip God his own way! Now that they had not in France: the bible was ſhut up in an unknown Heatheniſh tongue. While here, thou and I can make as free uſe of our's as a biſhop; can no more be ſent to priſon unjuſtly than a judge; and are as much taken care of by the

laws as the parliament man who makes them. And this levelling makes people ſo diſmal. Theſe poor French fellows uſed to be the merrieſt dogs in the world; but ſince equality come in, I don't believe a Frenchman has ever laughed.

Tom. What then doſt thou take French *liberty* to be?

Jack. To murder more men in one night, than ever their poor king did in his whole life.

Tom. And what doſt thou take a *Democrat* to be?

Jack. One who likes to be governed by a thouſand tyrants, and yet can't bear a king.

Tom. What is *Equality?*

Jack. For every man to pull down every one that is above him, till they're all as low as the loweſt.

Tom. What is the *new* RIGHTS *of* MAN?

Jack. Battle, murder, and ſudden death.

Tom. What is it to be an *enlightened people?*

Jack. To put out the light of the goſpel, confound right and wrong, and grope about in pitch darkneſs.

Tom. What is *Philoſophy*, that Tim Standiſh talks ſo much about?

Jack. To believe that there's neither God, nor devil, nor heaven, nor hell: to dig up a wicked old fellow's rotten bones, whoſe books, Sir John ſays, have been the ruin of thouſands, and to ſet his figure up in a church and worſhip him.

Tom. And what mean the other hard words that Tim talks about---*organization* and *func-*

tion, and *civiſm*, and *inciviſm*, and *equalization*, and *inviolability*, and *imperſcriptible?*

Jack. Nonſenſe, gibberiſh, downright hocus-pocus. I know 'tis not Engliſh; Sir John ſays 'tis not Latin; and his valet de cham ſays 'tis not French neither.

Tom. And yet Tim ſays he ſhall never be happy till all theſe fine things are brought over to England.

Jack. What, into this Chriſtian country, Tom? Why, doſt know they have no *ſabbath?* Their mob parliament meets on a Sunday to do their wicked work, as naturally as we do to go to church. They have renounced God's word and God's day, and they don't even date in the year of our Lord. (Why doſt turn pale, man?) And the rogues are always making ſuch a noiſe, Tom, in the midſt of their parliament-houſe, that their ſpeaker rings a bell, like our penny-poſtman, becauſe he can't keep them in order.

Tom. And doſt thou think our Rights of Man will lead to all this wickedneſs?

Jack. A ſure as eggs are eggs.

Tom. I begin to think we're better off as we are.

Jack. I'm ſure on't. This is only a ſcheme to make us go back in every thing. 'Tis making ourſelves poor when we are getting rich.

Tom. I begin to think I'm not ſo very unhappy as I had got to fancy.

Jack. Tom, I don't care for drink myſelf, but thou doſt, and I'll argue with thee in thy own way; when there's all equality there

will be no ſuperfluity; when there's no wages there'll be no drink; and levelling will rob thee of thy ale more than the malt-tax does.

Tom. But Standiſh ſays if we had a good government there'd be no want of any thing.

Jack. He is like many others, who take the king's money and betray him. Tho' I'm no ſcholar, I know that a good government is a good thing. But don't go to make me believe that *any* government can make a bad man good, or a diſcontented man happy.—What art muſing upon man?

Tom. Let me ſum up the evidence, as they ſay at 'ſizes—Hem! To cut every man's throat who does not think as I do, or hang him up at a lamp-poſt!—Pretend liberty of conſcience, and then baniſh the parſons only for being conſcientious!—Cry out liberty of the preſs, and hang up the firſt man who writes his mind!—Loſe our poor laws!—Loſe one's wife perhaps upon every little tiff!—March without clothes, and fight without victuals!—No trade!—No bible!—No ſabbath nor day of reſt!—No ſafety, no comfort, no peace in this world—and no world to come!—Jack, I never knew thee tell a lie in my life.

Jack. Nor wou'd I now, not even againſt the French.

Tom. And thou art very ſure we are not ruined.

Jack. I'll tell thee how we are ruined.—We have a king ſo loving, that he would not hurt the people if he could; and ſo kept in, that he could not hurt the people if he would.